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Statement on East Timor
to the
United Nations Special Committee on Decolonization
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by

Komitee Indonesië

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Mr. Chairman, distinguished Delegates,

On the 12th of August 1988, twenty one petitioners addressed this Committee on the subject of East Timor. They came from twelve different countries and from four different continents, but they all had one common aim: to plea for the rights of the people of East Timor. The Indonesian delegate opposed the hearing of the petitioners´ statements on the grounds that they had "the purpose of gaining publicity and recognition for themselves", that their expertise on the question was self-proclaimed, and that their organizations and groups were "obscure" and "unknown". The petitioners, however, included members of several national and international Parliaments, representatives from Amnesty International and Asia Watch, and delegates from the two biggest parties of East Timor, Fretilin and UDT.

Even more outrageous was the description of the petitions given by the Indonesian delegate as "ludicrous claims, half-truths and outright lies", or a "detestable campaign of malice and slander against Indonesia". The Indonesian delegate´s argument rested upon material written by Mr. Nuno Rocha, editor of the Lisbon magazine ´O Tempo´, and Mr.van Raay, a member of the European Parliament. But even before the Indonesian delegate made his statement the world was well aware of the unlikely circumstances under which Mr. Rocha wrote his reports. As for the findings of Mr.van Raay, one month after his third visit to East Timor, the better-informed European Parliament rebuffed his reports with a resolution, adopted with 164 votes in favour, 12 against and 15 abstentions, where it urged for the end of "the illegal occupation of East Timor" by Indonesia and for other measures "in order to guarantee the exercise of the right of the people of East Timor to self-determination".

The contempt of the Indonesian government for petitioners, its persecution mania and its reliance upon biased reports are not new. Particularly astonishing was the insinuation of the Indonesian delegate that "none of the petitioners have seen fit to (...) challenge or otherwise rebut" that "the process of decolonization of East Timor has been completed through the implementation of the right to self-determination by the East Timor people".

Mr.Chairman,
If one studies the last fourteen years of Indonesian propaganda, one can see how Jakarta tried to divert the attention of the world from the facts at the base of this issue: the aggression and occupation of East Timor´s territory by Indonesian troops. The delegate´s insinuation is one more example of that diversionary manoeuvre. Initially the government of Indonesia attempted to exploit the world´s indignation and concern for the genocidal war in East Timor to keep the issue limited to the

field of human rights. Then, while shifting the accent from the physical to the cultural genocide, Jakarta aimed at reducing the issue to a question of development. ´Development aid´ to East Timor is still the base of Jakarta´s propaganda, as the statement of the Indonesian delegate confirms.

It is, of course, important to denounce the so-called ´development´ that Indonesia has brought about in East Timor, which is nothing more than a weapon to consolidate its hegemony over the territory, and a cover for its colonial exploitation.

It is even more important to denounce the physical and cultural genocide of the East Timorese people, and all violations of the human rights committed by Indonesia in East Timor. That was exactly what Bishop Ximenes Belo did in his February letter to Secretary-General Perez de Cuellar, when he wrote "we continue to die as a people and a nation". In the same month he wrote to the Apostolic Nuncio in Jakarta, specifying many cases of imprisonment, torture an murder. In the light of what the Indonesian delegate said of the petitioners and of the petitions last year, I wonder how he would react to Bishop Belo and his courageous words.

It is essential here to reaffirm that the invasion, occupation and annexation of East Timor by Indonesia constitute violations of international law, and first of all because they violate the right of the East Timorese people to self-determination. On the other hand, as article 16 of the ´Charter of Economic Rights and Duties of States´ stresses, a first condition for development is the banning of colonialism, neo-colonialism and all sorts of foreign aggression, occupation and domination, in short, the implementation of the right to self-determination. The right to self-determination is also seen as a condition for the existence of the other human rights and fundamental freedoms. This means that there is no possibility for real development in East Timor and there is no guarantee for the respect of human rights whilst the East Timorese are deprived of their right to self-determination.

Mr.Chairman,
These words are more than an answer to the quoted Indonesian insinuation, because every petitioner could easily refute that a decolonization process had ever taken place in East Timor. If not expressed, that position in fact underlay every petition. It is the conclusion one also draws after reading the eight resolutions of the General Assembly and the two of the Security Council on the question. And it is, after all, as Indonesia seems to forget, the reason why East Timor is inscribed in the agenda of the Decolonization Committee.

I shall briefly recall, anyway, the false arguments with which Indonesia tried to justify the invasion, occupation and annexation of East Timor, in order to rebut them.

While preparing their invasion, the Indonesian authorities tried to picture East Timor as economically inviable, pretending that its population should be incapable of making any claims on its independence. But, in line with its anti-colonial attitude, the United Nations has never regarded the criterion of economical inviability as a stumbling block towards independence. At least one fifth of its member states has a smaller population than East Timor, one sixth has a smaller territory: Indonesia cannot possibly claim that these countries gained their independence unrighteously? On the other hand, the presence of sufficient economic resources also contradicts the Indonesian argument. The present colonialist exploitation of East Timor´s coffee and oil by Indonesian monopolies betrays, on the contrary, that the very existence of these resources is one of the most important reasons that led to the occupation.

At a certain moment the Indonesian authorities started a campaign about the fancied historical and cultural bonds between East Timor and Indonesia. The alleged bonds, however, are nothing but make-believe history. Indonesia does not have any grounds for historical ties of territorial sovereignty with the region. Timor has never been subservient to any one of the empires, reigns and sultanates which developed from any of the islands, that nowadays form a part of Indonesia. Neither has East Timor ever been part of the Dutch East Indies. Moreover, the Javanese culture is alien to East Timor, as are the Indonesian language and the Islamic religion. The East Timor question is, therefore, completely different from those where the principle of national unity and territorial integrity of a country had been successfully invoked. This also explains why there were no Indonesian claims on East Timor until 1975, contrary, for instance, to the claims of India on Goa or of China on Macau. In fact, for years the Indonesian government has declared in the United Nations that the borders of Indonesia were those of the old Dutch East Indies and that it would not make any claims on other parts of the archipelago. In 1975 the United Nations spoke out in favour of the right of the East Timorese people to self-determination and independence and thus clearly rejected the hypothesis of ´reintegration´.

Mr.Chairman,
After the invasion took place, the Indonesian government denied that it was the Indonesian forces who were taking part in the aggression. According to Jakarta it was the East Timorese troops, guided by some Indonesian ´volunteers´, which entered East Timor on ´invitation´. Later on the argument became the right to ´self-defense´ against a supposed attack of Fretilin on Indonesian territory. Finally the Indonesian government shamelessly

presented the invasion as a ´humanitarian intervention´, by purposely exaggerating the number of refugees in West Timor and by telling lies about the situation in East Timor.

All these justifications clearly contradict each other. Moreover each one of them is easily refutable. Who could speak of ´volunteers´ after an invasion using advanced weapons by land, sea and in the air? Who would be able to maintain in the same way that there was an invitation, after the revelations in April 1976 of the KOTA leader Jose Martins? How can one still employ the concept of self-defense after the publication of numerous documents, which prove that the preparations for the aggression had started long before? And what is the use of talking about humanitarian intervention, knowing that the number of Timorese casualties was over the hundred thousand shortly after the invasion?

East Timor is irrefutably a victim of an act of aggression, which started with the invasion and occupation of its territory by Indonesia. This formed an obvious violation of the Charter of the United Nations. It constituted an international crime against peace and against the right of the East Timorese people to self-determination and independence. Besides, the Indonesian government committed an act of disobedience to the United Nations by maintaining the occupation of the territory even after the repeated summoning of the Security Council to withdraw its troops.

Mr.Chairman,

The international community refused to take part in the farce staged by Jakarta, whose final acts were a so-called ´request of East Timor for integration in Indonesia´ and the official annexation of the territory. The Indonesian government complained about such lack of understanding. But its hypocritical protests could not cover up the fact that it was Indonesia itself which in East Timor had blocked all conditions that international law (through resolution 1541 (XV)) demands for an eventual integration as one of the possible modes of implementing the right to self-determination. The occupation of East Timor prevented the first condition: the existence of "free political institutions". The puppet government and the caricature of a ´Representative People´s Assembly´ formed by the Indonesians in Dili could not fulfil the condition of an "advanced stage of self government". The ensuing discussion and pseudo-decision by such ´Assembly´ formed the counterpart of the demanded "wishes of the territory´s peoples (...) expressed through informed and democratic processes, impartially conducted and based on universal suffrage".

In conclusion: instead of assistance with the exercise of the right of the East Timorese people to self-determination, the colonialist integration practised by Indonesia formed a deliberate violation of that right. This is also what the February letter of Bishop Belo to the Secretary-General is about, and it is the base of his plea for "the holding of a referendum promoted by the United Nations for the people of Timor".

Thank you so much.